

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Lesbian Family's Developmental Processes an Extension of Carter and McGoldrick's Model

STUDENT: Trent Barstad

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

COLLEGE: Teachers College

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The purpose of this study was to examine whether current literature on the stages of family developmental life cycles accurately describes the family and developmental tasks for lesbian families. Due to the lack of empirical literature on this topic it was important to examine the experiences of families headed by two women related to developmental tasks experienced versus those proposed. Several authors have suggested there may be differences between same-sex and opposite-sex parents in relation to parenting styles and some child outcomes. However, none of these differences have been studied within the framework of family developmental tasks. The purpose of the present investigation was to explore the diversity of family structures, goals, and strategies within families headed by two women. The present study collected data, explored the themes related to families headed by two women who have children in the home who have not yet entered school. The goal was to develop a theory from this data using Grounded Theory which was compared with existing family developmental tasks theory and

proposed changes to existing theory to take into account expected differences lesbian families may present.